

FASHION NOTEBOOK

This Designing Trio Wasn't All in Accord

By ELENI

Star Fashion Writer

The woman from Rome took issue with two of her male designing colleagues last night on the question millions ask — "Are women better designers for women than men?"

Micol Fontana said a woman knows "much more what to wear and does not design clothes that are so crazy-looking." Challenging her stand at the American Newspaper Women's Club "Summit Conference on Fashion" were Pierre Balmain of Paris and Arnold Scaasi of New York.

Said Balmain, "When a designer is a bachelor, he can design for all women. I've noticed that married men designed with their wives in mind. Take, for example, the late Jacques Fath's Genevieve, and Marcel Rochas' Helene. I agree with the statement that men should dress women because they are more objective. Women know the details of fashion but these are just details," the charming French member of the couture stated.

Arnold Scaasi, the 1958 winner of the coveted American Fashion Critics Award, paid a backhanded tribute to his feminine designing colleagues by saying, "No one looks better in Pauline Trigere's clothes than Pauline." He added gallantly, "and Signora Fontana" who wore a graphic velvet coat over a matching short-evening dress of graphite gray velvet and shoes and handbag to match that she had designed. He feels women designers inevitably design in their own image.

The verbal fireworks exploded after a showing of six of each of the designer's fashions. All were widely applauded. When Scaasi's first design a blue wool T-square coat with the widened shoulder-look came out, he appeared stunned. He said, "I believe in short skirts but not that short" and proceeded to recall the model and yank the dress down a bit, which amused the audience no end.

Their Styles

Several hundred distinguished Washingtonians turned out for the cocktail event. Nearly all went through the receiving line headed by ANWC President Alice T. Curran, the designers, and Elinor Griest, second vice president of the club. Many of the women came wearing designs of either Balmain, Fontana or Scaasi.

Mrs. Wiley Buchanan was overheard telling Perle Mesta that her Fontana dress was the same one she'd worn in Luxembourg when she was there visiting. "It still looks pretty and in style," said Mrs. Mesta.

A surprise model during the fashion show was Bonnie Buchanan, who wore a Fontana gown. Another surprise came when Annette Culler, program chairman of the ANWC, introduced Gioia Fontana, twenty-year-old niece of Micol and the newest addition to the House of Fontana. It was founded by Amabile Fontana and is now run by her daughters in

Rome. Micol, Zoe and Giovanna. Gioia is Zoe's daughter.

Busy Day

Yesterday was a busy day for the designing contingent. They were received by Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower at the White House at 12:30 p.m. At 11 a.m. they had a Washington-style press conference. At 1 p.m. there was a luncheon at the Italian Embassy. Radio and television interviews followed in the afternoon and then the party given by the ANWC at 6 p.m.

All three designers were delighted to see Mrs. Eisenhower looking so well. Said Balmain, "We are old friends." Said Signora Fontana "She's lovely." Said Scaasi, "Seeing Mrs. Eisenhower wearing that burgundy dress convinces me that when it's a toss up between black and white and color, color wins out."

Chatting animatedly during

the cocktail hour which preceded the showing, held in the Sheraton-Park's ballroom, were Lady Lewis, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Rietzke, Mr. and Mrs. Garfield Kass, the Myron Cowens, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hecht, Mr. Coulter Huyler, Mrs. Preston Wire, Mrs. Leslie Gould, Col. and Mrs. M. Robert Guggenheim, Mrs. James L. Houghteling, Miss Elizabeth Fairall, the Jean Baubes, Mme. Gavoty, Mrs. Arthur E. Summerfield, Mrs. Edson O. Sessions, Mrs. Martin Vogel, Marcella M. duPont, Mrs. Wilber M. Brucker, Mme. Herve Alphand, and Mrs. Charles Cabell and her daughter, Katie.